

The
RED FLAG



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THE RED FLAG,

OR

DANGER ON THE LINE.

The Society for the Study of Addiction,

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A WEDDING PARTY JUST LEAVING CHURCH. [Page 26.]

THE RED FLAG,

OR

DANGER ON THE LINE.

BY

ELYS,

AUTHOR OF "TRAPS," ETC.

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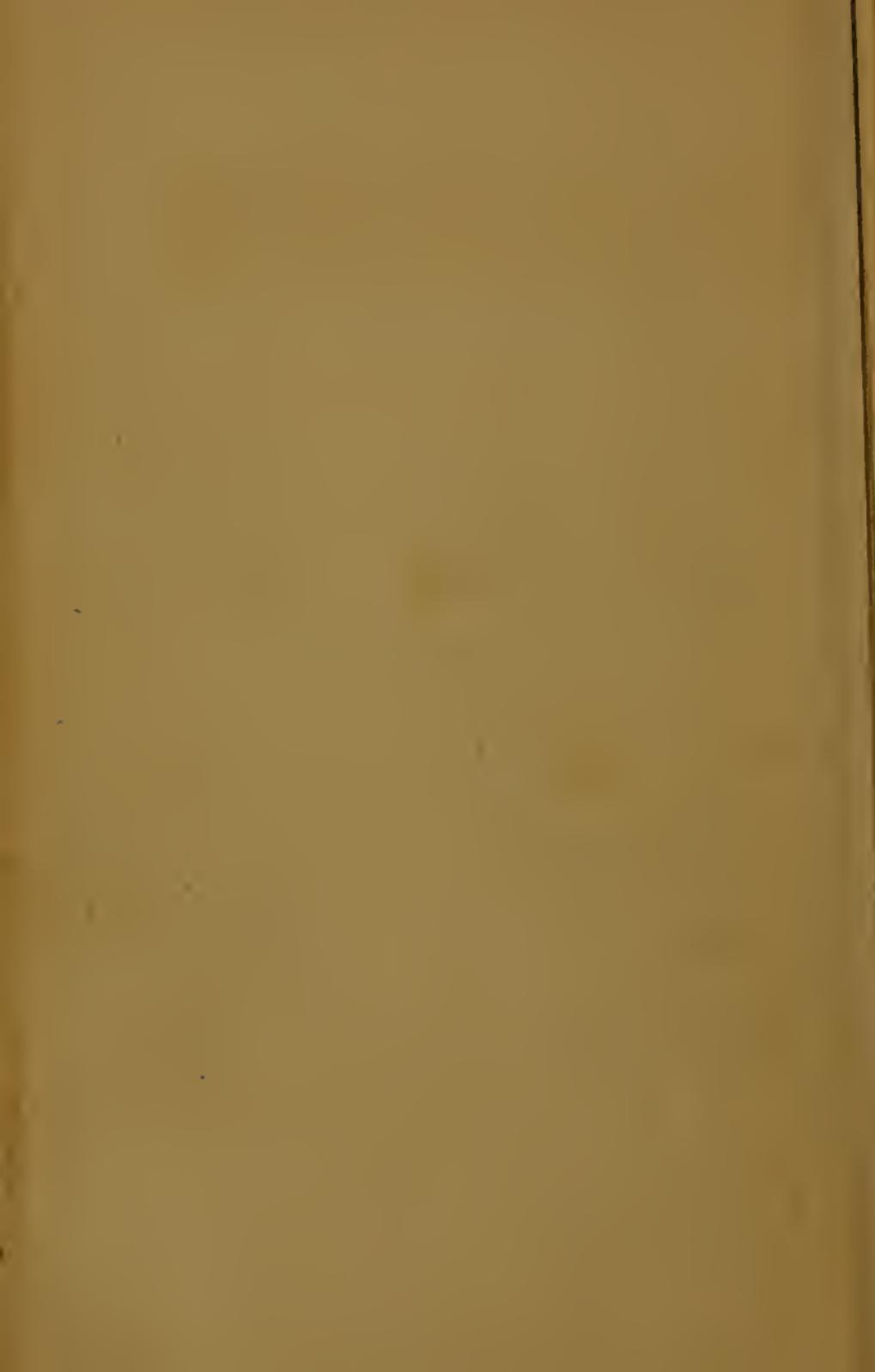
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THE RED FLAG, OR DANGER ON THE LINE.

INTRODUCTION.

Though men in this glorious land of England consider themselves free, and man is in many ways prevented from oppressing man, yet there are great evils planned and worked by the Prince of Evil which make this poor country groan.

Among these not the least—some say the greatest—is the drink system, whose branches ramify through the whole country like a huge railway, so that even its most isolated inhabitants live within easy reach of its stations, and all, without exception, feel the oppression of the arrangement.

As we have said, the Prince of Evil is the originator of the whole concern ; and report says, he has made a very good thing of it ; and in this country, at least, it has paid better than any of his other speculations. His plans of working are admirably adapted to mislead ; and he has so cleverly managed to get the ear of fashion, that thousands and thousands have been made to work his will thereby. But of this more anon.

There is living in this country a good old gentleman, named Salvo. Of his work, and joys, and troubles, this little story will mainly treat. About fifty years ago, Salvo received his commission from the Great King, who said to him : “Salvo, I grieve to see the people whom I have made, and even those to whom I am known, carried away from Me by the drink trains which My enemy has established, and I commission thee to warn them of his evil intentions and wily conduct toward them.”

So spoke the King ; and from that time to the present, Salvo has been at his work. He has had more and more willing helpers, and there

are hopeful signs that, in the course of time, the enemy's line will be in disrepute. No doubt, if that fail to bear him as good a profit, he will find some other means for beguiling mankind ; but even if so, the Great King, who is his superior in power and resource, will find adequate means of checking him in all his malicious designs.

THE ENEMY'S ARRANGEMENTS AND SALVO'S COUNTER-ARRANGEMENTS.

We said that the drink railway was spread like a network all over the country. It was most cleverly contrived so that the stations from which the trains started daily, called "Little-Drop" stations, should be very handy to everyone's dwelling. The trains, though coming from every part of the land, all converged to one centre and terminus called "Drunkard's Grave"; but this fact was as carefully concealed from the public as possible. The beauties and comfort of the car-

riages were expatiated upon, but never was it announced that the express train for "Drunkard's Grave" was about to start. Never were the passengers asked where they were for, or to show their tickets. Indeed, the working of the line was so planned that there was no need of tickets. "For," said the proprietor, "people would then have to think where they were going to, and count the cost beforehand ; whereas if we let anyone who pleases take a seat, we are sure of a train full, and can exact the payment when they reach the end of their journey. Not one of them can cheat me."

Very much has been expended upon the carriages that they may be comfortable ; the seats are splendidly cushioned, the walls gilded and hung with mirrors ; above all, the heating and lighting arrangements are just such as to contribute to thorough comfort and cheerfulness. The windows are blinded ; for, though tradition speaks of travelling through vineyards, there are, in reality, too many sad sights of toiling women and neglected children to be seen from the windows

for the passengers to be induced to look out. Indeed, very few care to see the country ; they like to forget that there is anyone else in the world except themselves and their merry fellow-passengers. Besides it is so pleasant inside, for, as well as the light, warmth, and comfort, the company provide music and singing gratis.

The air of the country through which the line passes is peculiar ; it is poisonous, and becomes more and more so as you advance. The effect, though highly injurious, is pleasant at the time. Hence its great danger. One of the most cunning devices that the Prince of Evil has hit upon to make his line pay is the way in which he has worked upon the doctors of the land. To them he said, "If you only order your patients a ride in one of my trains it will soothe all their pains, and make them forget themselves ; they will like our prescription so well that they are sure to come to you again. Of course, it will not cure them, but that is all the better for you." And so the idea that the trains were exceedingly valuable—nay, even essential to health—was

gradually inculcated, and was handed down from father to son, from mother to daughter, from generation to generation, until there was no pain, ache, or accident, common to humanity, but a ride in the drink train was said to be an infallible remedy, or, at least, the best thing that could be done.

Here was work for Salvo, enough to make his heart fail ; only he was a brave man, and had a commission from the Great King.

So many years had the world been accustomed to these trains, that it was long before it would hear anything against them. People said their fathers, their grandfathers, and their great-grandfathers had all travelled in them, and why should not they ? True, some had gone so far along the line that they shuddered to think of them ; but then the present generation thought themselves wiser. They would only go a little way, that was quite necessary for their health.

In spite of all this, and also being told that the whole thing was made by order of the Great King, and was His provision for His people,

Salvo ceased not to warn those who were starting, and to hurry out those who had gone too far. He spoke to them, he wrote books of warning, and posted up plain statements of facts in every available corner that the eyes of the passengers and would-be passengers might rest upon them. Besides this he had red danger flags held out all along the line, in case anyone might look out, and thereby take alarm.

SALVO AT WORK.

As almost everyone starts at Little-Drop Station for their journey in the drink train, Salvo wisely spends most of his time and energy there, although, when he is needed further up the line, he is always ready to give all the help in his power.

We will watch the good old gentleman doing his day's work. Though old, he is still vigorous, his hair is beautifully white, his eyes gray and

kind, and the wrinkles in his face only help him to smile. These qualifications, with his look of radiant benevolence, suit him admirably for winning his way with young and old, rich and poor ; but one glance at his firm resolute mouth shows, even to the youngest, that however kind he is not a man to be trifled with. He looks just what he is—a man with a firm purpose who holds a high commission. Though his message to mankind is one which needs a delicate and courteous delivery, he leaves the world in no doubt as to its import. But we will watch Salvo as he starts to his work in the morning, after a comfortable breakfast with his wife and family in his own pleasant suburban villa. On his way to Little-Drop Station he meets little groups of children amusing themselves in the street before the school-bell rings ; to them he speaks—“ Shall I tell you where I am going to, little people, and what I am going to do ? ”

The little faces are turned up in wonder at the gentleman, as much as to say, “ Go on, sir.”

“ Well,” he continued, “ I am going to Little-

Drop Station to see if I can stop some of the people from getting into the drink trains, and to keep mothers from putting their babies in."

The little eyes open as much as to say, "Why ever do you do that?"

"Did any of you ever ride in the drink train?"

"Why, yes, of course," said one little ragged fellow, "and it's jolly; father is always there, and mother very often, and we all likes it. I wish father wouldn't go quite so often though, he's awful when he does come home, and he spends all the money he gets over it."

"Do you know where that train goes to, children?" said Salvo.

"No," was the unspoken answer.

"Well, it runs to a place called Drunkard's Grave. No one who goes all the way comes back again to tell us exactly what it is like, but we know for certain that it is a very awful place; many have been very near to it, and they tell us how fearful the way gets, and how quickly the train goes the latter part of the journey, scarcely

stopping at all, so that it is a chance if you get out without breaking your neck."

The circle of clean and dirty little faces was enlarging as he went on. "Did you ever hear of the Prince of Evil?"

They nodded.

"Do you love him, and would you like to go and live with him in his country?"

A loud "No" sounded all round.

"Very well, then have nothing to do with the drink trains; that wicked Prince has made them so comfortable to take as many people as he can to Drunkard's Grave, which is in his country."

"But we only go a little way, there's no harm in that, guvnor," said a big lad.

"Did you ever hear of anyone who meant to go all the way, my boy? If you start at this station of Little-Drop, you do just the same as those who have gone furthest on the line; they all began by sitting in those comfortable carriages, and as they went on they got stupefied with the poisonous air of the country through which they passed. Now before I go, how many of you will

give me a promise that you will not get into the drink train again?"

Joe and Jack and Sally and little Bess shouted out, "I will"; so the gentleman put blue favours in their hats, that he might know his little friends again, and, promising to see them another day, continued his walk.

As soon as his back was turned, the big lad, whose name was Tom, pounced upon Joe.

"You old hypocrite, you know you likes a ride in that ere train as well as anybody else. What are you making a saint of yourself before the gentleman for, as though you was better nor the rest on us?"

"I only told him as I wouldn't go again, and I won't for all you say," said Joe, as soon as his rough companion gave him breathing space.

"The more goose you," was the retort.

Just then the school bell rang, and they all ran off except Tom, who had finished his education.

Salvo's four little fellow-workers did him good service, for in the playground four separate groups had to have an account of the whole affair to

explain the blue favours. Even little Bess was heard to give in her own fashion the story of the "old gemmun, and what he said about the dink tain." Little Minnie and Patty thought they would like pretty blues too, and the next day they all resolved to wait in the same place to see if the gentleman came again. We may be sure they were not disappointed.

SALVO AT LITTLE-DROP STATION.

On entering the station, Salvo saw the drink-train standing ready to start, the carriage doors all open showing the seats padded with crimson velvet ready for even the poorest to take a seat ; all were welcomed by the malicious station-master and officials, who were never tired of expatiating upon the ease of travelling and especially upon the benefit to health. They scowled as they caught sight of Salvo. "I wish that old fellow were hanged," muttered a porter,

"he spoils all our trade, it's no good to try to gull anyone if he will keep telling them where the train is going to." As he said this, he went very quickly up to a young woman carrying a baby, for fear Salvo should have a chance of speaking to her first and, very politely asking her if he should hold the baby while she got in, said he would put her into a comfortable carriage and see to her luggage.

Our friend saw through the dodge and did not mean to lose his chance that way. So he noticed which carriage she had been put into, and as soon as the porter was gone, went to warn her.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Weakins, but might I ask where you are going to?"

"Oh, I'm not going far, only a little way; just for my health, you know!"

"And the baby, why do you take him?"

"The little dear, it always does him good, he is quieter and better here than anywhere else; we come every day to have a short ride, and it does us both a great deal of good; we should never get on at all without it."

"Excuse me, madam, but you are mistaken there. I have no doubt that you find yourself very comfortable, and the baby is quiet ; but, believe me, the air of the country through which the train passes, though soothing, is poisonous ; it cannot give you health, but it really undermines your strength, and makes you a ready victim to disease."

"I tell you, sir, it does me good, and there's an end of it," said Mrs. Weakins, not caring to hear anything against her favourite line.

"Madam," said Salvo, gravely, "do you know where this train runs to?"

"No," she said, shortly, "nor do I care. I tell you I only go a little way ; sometimes, indeed, I get out before it really starts."

"Well, madam, to tell you the plain truth it runs to Drunkard's Grave ; you've heard of that place, haven't you ?"

"Yes," she said, with a slight shudder, which she tried to hide.

Indeed she had heard of it, for were not her young husband and her old father both gone

there? Her black bonnet and dress plainly showed her recent widowhood.

"Even, madam, supposing that you should always have sufficient strength of mind to enable you to get out before the air gets very poisonous and stupefying, what about the little one? How do you know he will not get so fond of the train as not to care to get out just when you would wish? Many a mother has cursed the day when she taught her child the way to this station."

"It's all very true, sir, what you say; I'll think about it. When I get a bit stronger I will try to do without my ride."

"Won't you let me help you out again now, Mrs. Weakins? the train will soon be starting," urged Salvo.

"No, thank you, sir," and Mrs. Weakins shook her head decidedly.

Salvo was obliged to leave, giving a sad, loving glance at the innocent blue eyes of the child, and wondering whether he would have another chance of saving him.

Just as he turned round he met two little boys who had jumped in at that instant ; they had got a sixpence which one had just received for holding a horse. He was generously treating his friend to a share by taking him a little way in the drink train.

"Come along," said Salvo, as he took a hand of each. "I will give you another sixpence and put you into a nicer train than this."

There was no time for argument, so he pulled the two little wondering lads on to the platform just as the train was moving on.

"Be thankful you are safe out, my boys," said the old gentleman ; "and now I'll be as good as my word, so here's another sixpence, and come along with me to the teetotal train."

As they went, one on each side of him, Salvo told them his reasons for wanting them to get out of that train and come to the other. Before he left them, they had promised him not to go near the drink train again ; and they went off with blue favours in their hats.

The station from which the teetotal train started

was a much pleasanter place. Our friend would much rather have spent his time there had that been his lot, but there he was not so much needed; so, after speaking to some of his many friends who were about there, he went back again to his post.

The first person he saw was a clergyman, the Rev. Nonpareil Nonsuch, reading his paper on the platform while waiting for the train.

"I'll leave him alone," thought Salvo. "I know well enough what he will say to me ;" but in another minute he changed his mind ; for was not his message to all ? and if the people needed warning, surely their ministers ought to know of the danger.

"Good morning," said the clergyman, holding out his hand ; "so you are still at your work. I'm sure you have my hearty good wishes in it, only, I must say, I think you a little too strict ; your work, my good sir, should be further up the line, where there is real danger. This end is allowed by all to be very harmless ; in fact, sir, I believe it to be one of the benefits provided by

the Great King for His subjects. It seems to me mere ingratitude towards Him to deny yourself the pleasure of a short ride."

"If you had worked as I have for many years, sir," returned Salvo, "I think you would have come to the same conclusion that I have, that it is better to warn people here when they start, than to wait until they are half stupefied with the poison, and find the greatest difficulty in getting out at all. As in everything else, 'prevention is better than cure.'"

"Of course," said the minister, "there are cases which may be better stopped at the outset — low-natured, weak-minded people who never know when they have gone far enough; but you seem to me to be indiscriminating. I thought at first you were coming to warn me of the danger into which I was about to run."

"To tell you the truth, sir, that was my intention. I have seen many good men, and hundreds of the clergy who have been allured on and on till they have reached the awful terminus 'Drunkard's Grave.' They all started at this station

as you are doing now. And, sir, I have an additional argument for you. Many a poor wretch throws in my face, when I try to save him from ruin, the fact that you travel on the line and therefore it must be good and safe."

"Good morning, sir," said the clergyman ; "I must be going."

As he turned away he said to himself, "A very good man, but rather eccentric; quite a fanatic, indeed." But a still deeper voice in him said, "Quite true all he says, but very disagreeable."

By this time Salvo, a little stung by his repulse, and feeling, as he often did, disheartened in his thankless task, was taking note of a company of grandees. My lady of Bredsoe and Taughtill, with all her attendants, the young ladies her sisters, and the young gentlemen who were pleased to be where they were. But the centre of the group was the six weeks old lord of Bredsoe and Taughtill of the future; he was in the arms of an old nurse, and was resplendent in his christening robes. Strange that the drink

train should be thought a fit place for the noble infant! But "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin," and all the classes showed the same tendency to be gulled by the railway manager with the doctors on his side. The old nurse, who was considered an oracle on all baby matters, was a great advocate for the line, and would have thought that all evil would attend the young lord's internal arrangements, had she not carefully brought him for his daily ride. She herself was a practised traveller, and did not forget the needs of her own health and comfort, though we cannot say so much for her care over the young lord. Once, though my lady never knew it, she let him roll off her lap; and at another time she might have had a still worse accident, for he would have dropped under the wheels as she was getting out had not a fellow-passenger caught him and saved him. Such had been the poor little gentleman's adventures in his short life of six weeks! Now, however, that he had got a name, and was Anthony Gerald Fitzwilliam Fortesland, eighth Earl of Bredsoc and

Taughtill of the future, the event must be celebrated by all the party in this way. "What could be better as a celebration?" thought they; "in fact the boy would hardly be christened at all were this part of the ceremony left out."

Salvo watched and heartily pitied the little unconscious lord, who would not be likely to have to wait long for his earldom, for his father was on before, far down the line, and it seemed as though no power on earth could prevent his reaching the terminus. This was no place for speaking, so Salvo put down in his pocket-book a memorandum to send my lady a paper showing the dangers of the line. Then the old gentleman looked at his watch, and found that it was time for him to go home to get ready for the post, for that less obtrusive work must not be neglected.

As he was leaving the station he saw a wedding-party, bride and bridegroom, bridesmaids and groomsmen, just leaving church. As he was passing, our friend heard the bride saying, "Do, Frank, dear, please, for my sake, every one will think it so strange if we don't. Just to-

day ; I wont tease you about it again. We can do as we like another time, but now everyone is looking at us."

"You go, Florence, darling, if you wish ; I will wait for you."

"Nonsense, Frank, on our wedding day, and we not go together ! How dreadful that would sound."

"What are we all waiting for ?" said a voice from one of the groomsmen behind.

"The first quarrel," answered one of the bridesmaids, with a merry twinkle in her eye.

The words, however, caught Frank's ear, and sounded so unpleasant that he yielded, thinking "only this once, I will talk to Florence seriously about it when I get her to myself to-morrow."

"Silly girl !" thought Salvo ; "she may have to rue this day."

The old gentleman's thoughts were sad as he walked home. "What good has this day done ?" he said to himself. He did not know of any except the children that had listened to him ; but he knew it was as likely as not that some one

would tell them next day that what he had said was all nonsense, and they would be just as ready to believe that. But could he have seen into the hearts of all those he had spoken to that day, he would have seen that his words, though unwelcome, were busy in their minds, and were doing a work, useless as they had seemed.

SALVO AT MODERATION STATION.

The following day Salvo decided to spend at the next station on the line, which was called Moderation Station. To this place it is considered a most desirable thing to travel daily.

As if dangers and accidents were not common enough, many hold that it is an excellent exercise for the young to practise the difficult jump from the carriage on to the platform of Moderation Station while the train is in motion, for it can hardly be said to stop at all. It certainly

slackens speed as it passes the station, and very many expert and experienced persons manage it with ease daily. Indeed, they look upon it as a great virtue, and laugh at those poor creatures who, not caring to take this perilous leap, prefer not to have anything to do with the train. They are, as a class, clear-headed, calculating individuals on whom the poisoned air does not have a very great effect. These people think it a very great mistake that the whole world is not made on their pattern, with perfect self-control and no quick impulses. They are as loud as Salvo himself, and even louder, in their denunciation of the folly of those who continue their journey on this line further than this station. It is neither safe nor respectable, say they, and besides is it not patronising the line made by the prince of evil, who is an arch traitor and enemy of our King? They are hardly less severe upon Salvo and his friends, who, distrusting their own dexterity in leaping out safely, and besides thinking that in starting on his line they are also patronising the prince, determine to have nothing to do

with it and endeavour to warn their friends of the danger.

As Salvo reached the station this particular day, the mid-day train, which was a favourite one, was just in sight. As it slowly passed the platform the whole company of these perfectionists came tumbling out with more or less risk. First to be seen was our clergyman acquaintance of yesterday. He managed as though he knew how, carefully swinging himself down and then taking a little jump with the train, so as to break the jerk. He evidently enjoyed his own dexterity ; but a stout brother clergyman, the Rev. Bigman Fitzeasy, who had travelled with him, did not get on so well. Indeed, he said as he grew older he really could not manage it, and the temptation to stay in the train was greater and greater every day—the getting out shook him so terribly. His companion looked rather scornfully at him ; he never would make a friend of one who went further along the line than this, it was not respectable for any one, and highly improper for a clergyman. This time the poor man had found it a great

effort ; he took both his friend's hands and pressed his lips firmly together as with determination he jumped out of the carriage. He came down on to the platform with a heavy thud, and then had to stand several minutes before he could get over the shock.

"Really, Nonsuch, I think I must give up this line altogether," said he ; "I cannot risk this again. It seems unsociable, I know ; but better that than go too far."

"But, my dear fellow, you do not mean to say you would give up the use because some go on to the abuse. It's necessary for your health. Why should you deny yourself of such lawful pleasure ? I have no fear that you would allow yourself to go too far. You are a man of too great self-control for that."

Mrs. Weakins with her baby are both asleep to-day in the corner of the carriage, and so she does not notice the Moderation Platform, where she meant to get out.

This station is very different from the last. There are no ready officials to offer polite as-

sistance, though there is need enough for them in the breakneck descent from the train that must be performed by all who wish to get out. There is no calling of the name of the station—if, indeed, it can be called a station, for it is only a long platform, muddy enough in wet weather, and dusty enough in dry. If you are in the train it is the easiest thing in the world to ride past without noticing it, for, as was before mentioned, the train does not actually stop, but only passes the platform slowly. There are no splendid appointments as at Little-Drop Station—merely high walls by way of an enclosure and a turnstile through which passengers must pass, and pay their fare to the one official as they do so. The system of payment on this line is peculiar, and requires explanation. The fare is paid in two kinds of coin—a certain sum in ordinary money, and also a certain sum in life coin. The proportion is fixed, and no double payment in the one can make up for the other. Many there are who, having abundance of the former and but little of the latter, would be glad to make the whole

payment in money. Again, there are others who, having no money, would gladly, but how foolishly, pay doubly in life coin.

At this place a large company, as I said, turned out ; for fashion in these days prescribes this as the limit of your journey, though formerly it was thought quite the thing to go much farther. Very many of those who alighted were amongst the best of the land, royalty and nobility, ministers of all denominations, doctors of every school, professors from colleges and universities, lawyers, officers of the army and navy, merchants, and tradespeople of every grade as well as tidy working men.

“ Surely a respectable company,” thought Salvo ; and yet from sad experience he knew that there were many among that company who would one day find great difficulty in getting out at this station, and would go on further and further, getting more and more affected by the poisonous air which as yet they hardly knew the danger of. He knew, also, that there were many others in that train, who had fully in-

tended to get out, but almost before they knew it the train had passed on.

The old gentleman therefore took out his papers from his pocket, and gave them away to all who would take them. Then he got the chance of a few words with some of them, but he found them such self-satisfied people, sure that they were not hurt by their ride, and that they never would go one inch beyond what was good for them, that they paid very small heed to his words. So he tried another strain, and urged them to deny themselves this dangerous pleasure for the sake of the weak in mind and body, and especially for the sake of their children, who were following their example. This last argument was stronger, and several gave it up for the sake of their little ones.

"For," said they, as they looked at their noble boys and lovely girls, "it would kill us should they go to Drunkard's Grave; and how do we know that they will always have strength of mind to stop here, as their parents are so careful to do?"

As Salvo was leaving the station, he noticed a good lady of his acquaintance, Mrs. Lover Sonwell. She looked very sad, and as he greeted her the tears would come into her sweet grey eyes.

"Oh, sir," she said, "I wish you could talk to Reginald, he will not get out of the train with me here; he is getting into such a sad habit of staying in and going on to Too Much."

"My dear madam, you remember that a few years ago I wanted you to allow me to speak to him, and persuade him to leave the train alone altogether. I was then very much afraid you would have trouble with him, for Reginald has an easy temper and very little self-control."

"But he is a good, kind-hearted fellow," broke in his mother.

"Very true, madam, therefore all the more pity; however, don't be too sad about him, he is young yet, and I will do my best for him if you will let me; you know what my advice would be."

"I own, sir, I was afraid when I spoke to n y

that you would have him give up his daily ride with me from Little-Drop, which I am sure is necessary for his health, but could you not, without going so far as that, tell him of the sorrow he is causing me, and also of the danger of excess?"

"I can tell him what you say, madam, though I expect you have done it many times already, but believe me it will do no good. It is not from any want of love to you, nor yet because he does not know the danger, but simply that the poisonous air has so stupefying an effect upon him, that he really has not strength of will left in him to do that which he started with the full intention of doing, namely, get out here with you. And as for his health, I can assure you that it is not a necessity for that, there are thousands of people who live, and live heartily, without it. The poisonous air inhaled daily can do only harm either to yourself or your son."

The lady walked on silently; a battle was going on in her mind—which should win—love of her ride or love of her son? She thought of her

boy's danger, and resolved that at any sacrifice, if it were not indeed too late, she would do all in her power to save him. She knew that it would be hard upon him to keep him at home while she indulged herself as usual; then she thought of all her aches and pains, which she expected would be doubled did she not take her accustomed ride as the doctor had recommended her, and then she thought how singular all her friends would think her. At last she decided—how could she otherwise with such mother's love in her heart?—and said :

“I give you leave sir, to say what you will to my boy, and I will help you to the extent of my power.”

Salvo saw by the earnest look in her eyes what she meant, and assuring her that he would do his best, he parted with a warm “Thank you!” from the lady.

Little did Reginald think as he turned out foolish and merry at Too-Much Station, how noble a battle had been fought and won for him.

The next morning Salvo, who did not lose an

opportunity by neglect, called at Mrs. Lover Sonwell's house, at a time when he knew Reginald would be at home. The cunning lady, feigning an engagement sent her son to speak to the gentleman. So they talked the whole matter over. The poor fellow was feeling dreadfully ashamed of having gone so far the day before, and was trying to make resolutions, always to stop exactly where his mother stopped. "But, sir," he said, "it is so hard, and I have tried so many times, and it is always the same. Mother expects me to go with her, though sometimes I wish I needn't. She is always so quick and ready when we get to Moderation; but by that time I feel as though I cared for nothing in the world but to please myself."

Salvo then sent Reginald to fetch his mother. When she came into the room, after good mornings, &c., the old gentleman said :

"Madam, I come to ask for your promise, and your son's promise, never to enter the drink-train again."

"I give mine willingly," said Mrs. Lover

Sonwell. "I made up my mind yesterday."

"And you, Reginald?" he said, looking at the boy.

"Oh, I will gladly, if mother's willing," he answered. "I guess it will be rather hard, though."

"Remember, the line belongs to the enemies of our Great King, my boy; it is often hard to fight His enemies, but He will approve your resolve." And with two hearty good-byes the good friend was gone.

SALVO AT TOO-MUCH STATION.

After a few more days of work nearer home, we find our friend at a station still further up the line. A place which perhaps could hardly be called highly respectable, though in some circles it is considered proper for gentlemen to take an occasional call there. A lady is never expected to show her face at this station; if she does, she

immediately forfeits her right to the true. At one time it was considered so manly a journey that a girl would think nothing of a man who did not at least sometimes take it. Times are happily changing now, and wise girls are beginning to dislike men who have anything to do with the line. Salvo does not go alone ; this time he has a company of willing helpers, for there is active work to be done. The plan of the station is much the same as at Moderation. Of course the fare is higher, the distance being greater. The charge is by all considered exorbitant, and many have been ruined by it. Indeed the company have possessed themselves by degrees of some of the noblest fortunes in the land. When a man or woman once takes to riding beyond Moderation, they generally get all he or she has, whether rich or poor, sooner or later. The train does not stop here, but as at the last place goes slowly past the platform. As it comes up, Salvo and his party get ready to help all those who are trying to get out of themselves ; they need help, for the poison is acting upon them. Some foolish and un-

steady, others heavy and sleepy, none but need a hand. They also shout at the top of their voices, "Too Much, Too Much, all out here." Anything to rouse the stupid passengers.

Some of them listened to the warning voice, and rubbing their heavy eyes tumbled out, others who were very noisy, made fun, and sneered at Salvo, calling him an old fogey, and telling him he did not know what was good ; he should only follow their example, they were the best fellows in the country.

When the train left, the platform was covered with passengers trying to walk straight to the "way out"; but such was the effect of the poisoned air that they made all manner of curves and corners in their course. Some jolted up against their friends, some tried to walk arm in arm for one totterer to support the other. Others sat still on the ground where Salvo had put them, hoping to regain their powers ere long. The kind old gentleman had only two arms, so he could not help all, but he and each of his friends took a charge apiece, picking out the most

needy; the rest had to get on as best they could.

"Take my arm till you feel a little better," said Salvo to a fine old gentleman with a white necktie.

The trembling old man took the proffered arm saying, "I never meant to come as far as this; what will my congregation say? And should it ever come to the ear of the Bishop, ah me! I fear I am undone. I started with my clerical brethren, Nonsuch and Fitzeasy; they managed to get out at Moderation, but I—well, I was very comfortably seated, and it seemed soothing to my poor nerves; they have been much overwrought of late, sir, and now, I fear I shall have the trouble of disgrace as well as all the rest to bear. Ah, there's my churchwarden there, he's as bad, but he will not hesitate to say he saw me here if he catches sight of me. Just hide me a moment, sir, and be kind enough not to speak of me to any one."

He looked stupid, and maudlin tears came into his eyes; this was not the first time this foolish

old gentleman had been here, though you might have thought so from his words. What depth of stupidity to get into a train if he could hardly get out again, and did not want to go whither it went! What will not some stake for a little space of present enjoyment!

Salvo's other arm was given to a beautiful young lady, not much more than a girl. He had helped her out of the carriage, for she seemed half inclined to stay in when she saw how wet and dull it was outside. And she was fast losing her chance in her indecision when the friendly hand was offered, and decided for her this time. But what a chance! Had not a friend been at hand just then, who could say what the effect of the denser poison would be on so young and delicate a frame?

"Oh," she said, as she began to come to herself, "Papa will be so angry if he should get to know! He always gets out at Moderation himself, and I have heard him so often speak hardly of those who come so far as this. What shall I

do? But I do like riding so much—I know I shall get too far to get back some day."

Salvo looked down at the lovely, artless face, and could hardly believe that one so young should be speaking thus.

"My child," he said, very gravely but kindly, "you put yourself into a very dangerous position when you get into this train. Cannot you resolve with God's help that you will never start again? I fear for you, for the peril is awful."

"I know it is," she answered, the tears starting into her eyes; "but I am afraid papa will not let me give it up. He despises people who do so, and so does mamma, even more than those who go too far."

"May I ask who your papa is?" said Salvo. "Perhaps I could speak to him; it really is a matter of life and death, and he would hardly force you to go if he thought of the danger."

"I wish you would speak to him, sir, but I am afraid he will not listen to you; his name is Nonpareil Nonsuch, the Rev. Nonpareil Non-such."

"Oh, you are his daughter, are you? Yes, I know him. I was speaking to him only the other day. I will call upon him."

"He is so exact in his own habits he cannot or will not understand what is easy to him is difficult, nay, almost impossible, to others, even to his own child," mused Salvo. "But surely this will touch him, his own child in imminent danger."

Time would fail to tell of one tithe of those who arrived at Too Much that afternoon, ladies old and young, or those who should have been ladies, servant girls, nurses and cooks in abundance. Old men enfeebled by the poison yet still inhaling it, young men who should have been the pride instead of the disgrace of their families. Husbands who should have been spending their time and health and money in providing for the precious children God had given to them, and the trustful women they had induced to cast in their lots with them. Boys scarce more than children in merry groups naturally imitating their elders, and easily forming a habit which requires

a giant's strength to break ; for, in addition to the ordinary strength of habit, this is peculiarly binding, because the effect of the poisonous air is to create an almost insatiable craving for another breath of itself. So luring its victims on—the more they have, the more they want. Hence the extreme danger. And yet such is the stupidity of fashion and the world in general, that the line must be patronised by old and young, rich and poor alike, if they would not be pointed at as peculiar, or branded as weak-minded.

Though mothers, by the thousand, lose their sons and daughters in this way ; yet mothers, by the thousand, yea, by the million, teach their innocent little ones to love this ruin-breeding line. Shall we not blush for our country's stupidity, and work with Salvo to the extent of our power ?

The interview with the Rev. Nonpareil Non-such was not satisfactory to our friend. He found him busy at home with his parochial work, complaining very much of the carelessness of some of his parishioners.

When Salvo begged a few moments on important business, he was not very graciously received, and as he spoke of his business, the rev. gentleman did not attempt to conceal his indignation at a stranger venturing to speak to him about his own children, or his rage with his daughter for her guilty self-indulgence.

"Let her give it up altogether, indeed, because she can't stop at the right place ! Never shall child of mine join your cowardly party with my consent."

"Surely," Salvo ventured to put in, "there is no harm in avoiding danger ; it is mere foolhardiness to run risks when nothing is to be gained by it. Your daughter is rather brave than cowardly ; it will be no easy matter for her to give up the indulgence altogether. She knows that the poison so weakens her powers that she would gladly avoid its influence even at the risk of the loss of her self-gratification and certain persecution."

The Rev. Nonpareil Nonsuch winced a little, but merely said,

" You will oblige me, sir, if, in future, you will leave me to manage my own children. I shall speak to Flora about making confidants of strangers."

Whereupon Salvo was obliged to leave, wondering what else he could do for Flora, and hoping that her father's wrath would not so crush the poor girl that she would recklessly ride further than ever, and eventually be disowned by her rigorous parent.

INTOXICATION STATION.

As we are following the line in its course, we will next speak of Intoxication Station. The air here is densely poisonous, and the passengers who come so far are all affected by it. They lie about in the carriages like logs—in a stupid sleep many of them ; but some are very noisy ; and you would fancy from their words they were going to

do wonders—only when they try to stand you see that their power is gone ; they totter and fall unless they can catch at something to support them. There is a law by which all those who do come thus far should be put out, and not taken farther ; but, as it is to the personal advantage of the officials to take their passengers on, it is not much to be wondered at if they manage in some way to evade the law at times, by pretending not to notice or by some other excuse smuggling people still farther.

Salvo sometimes visits this station, but, as a rule, he finds his words of no use here—his warning comes too late ; and all he can do is to help remove those who arrive, and, remembering their names, try to find an opportunity of speaking seriously to them when the effect of the poison has left them sufficiently for them to take in what is said.

No one cares for their friends or relations to get so far as this, and Salvo went in company with many and many a miserable creature, each intent upon trying to rescue some dear one from

the train. Amongst others was our little friend Sally. The poor little feet pattered along so quietly on the cold stones, that Salvo did not hear her coming up behind him till she was quite close to his side and looked up into his face, glad to recognise a friend.

“ My pretty blue bow is gone,” said she, “ will you give me another? I kept it so safe in my hat, but I can never have it again, and I can’t go to school to-day because my boots are gone too.

Poor little Sally, shivered, and looked the very picture to make the tears come into your eyes. Before she had been tidily, even prettily dressed, now she only wore a shabby little frock, no jacket, no hat, no shoes or stockings.

“ Where are all your nice pretty things gone to, little one?” asked her friend. “ Why did mother take them?—because you were naughty?”

“ No, sir. I was very good, and sat down very quietly on my little stool, nursing my little pussy, when mother came in ; and she took hold of dear little Tabby by the tail and banged its head against the wall, and called it a nasty

little varmint ; and then, because I cried, she beat me with the poker, only I got under the table where she could not reach me. Then she told me to pull off my boots, they were too good for such as me ; and she took them, and my hat and jacket off the peg, and her own Sunday gown, and went away. Then I picked up dear little Tabby, and nursed her and stroked her, but she would not purr any more, and then I thought she was asleep, but she won't wake yet. I am afraid she is quite dead, and so I cried and cried till I went to sleep on the kitchen floor, and Mrs. Jenkins, from across the way, came in and woke me, and told me I should find mother here. I want her so badly, because I am so hungry, only I hope she won't beat me again. Will you help me find her, sir?"

"Yes, my child, we will try. But come in here and have some food first, perhaps mother will not have any for you," said Salvo, leading her into a coffee-tavern. "Was mother always like this, my child?"

"Oh, no," said Sally, "only father never

comes home now ; he is always in the train, and mother fretted about him and about the rent, and then she said nothing did her any good but riding in the train, and she could not go on working any longer ; so she went a ride with Mrs. Giveaway last week, and since that she has gone every evening ; but she always came back to me till last night.”

When they reached the station, Sally searched among all there till she spied her mother ; then, beckoning her friend to come and help, they led the poor, foolish creature, talking nonsense all the way, between them. At the gate she had to pay every penny that she had got by the sale of Sally’s clothes, as well as a great sum in life coin —she would soon be ruined at this rate.

“Haven’t you any more money, mother ?” asked the child. “There’s nothing in the house, and I was dreadful hungry this morning, only this kind gentleman gave me some dinner.”

The woman began to laugh in a silly way, she did not realise the state of the case. Poor creature ! She had tried her utmost to keep herself

and her child ; for her husband never came near her now—he was gone very far down the line. She had toiled hard ; but when one or two families removed, whose washing she did, and she could not get any more, ask where she would, the rent got behind, and her things had to be sold to pay it ; then it was, not knowing how to live honestly, she grew reckless, and went with a lot of idle women, who told her of the good times they had in the drink train, and of the gentleman they knew who gave them plenty of money for the fare if only they wore his colour.

So she had gone with them night after night, and forgotten her troubles while whizzing along in the luxurious train and lulled by the poisonous air. But this could not last for ever ; the gentleman accomplished his end and went away, but the poor foolish women could not or would not give up their nightly indulgence, while there was anything to sell in the house to pay for it. All this Salvo learnt after awhile ; that night the only thing that could be done was to lay the poor

creature on her bed, and there let her sleep, till her miserable waking.

Among those who were going to Intoxication Station to help their friends, Salvo recognised the face of the bride who had urged her husband into the train at Little Drop. Yes, it was that Florence, who had been the centre of attraction that day, and whose Frank was such a noble fellow. Poor girl, her short married life had aged her sadly. She had been the merry pet at home, gay, affectionate, winning, a trifle spoilt perhaps, but who could help pleasing her? Frank was a noble young fellow, and worthy of her. He had not told her, though he meant to some day, what very few but himself knew, that years ago, when he was about sixteen, he had got mixed up with some of the most constant passengers in the drink train ; that he had gone very far with them, and had not Salvo caught him from amongst them, and warned him faithfully of his danger, he would, most likely, by this time have been taken to Drunkard's Grave. However, he had till his wedding day faithfully kept the promise he then

gave never again to enter the train on any pretext.

We have seen the force brought to bear upon him that day.

The first breath of that fatal air bewitched him, he no longer cared for Florence as he did, he no longer cared to keep up decent appearances ; all he now cared for was the drink train and its indulgencies.

Unhappy Florence ! she in her careless way had touched an awful spring, and the miseries of life were showering down upon her head. Her love was true and deep, but Frank was so different from what she had expected.

This day she was hoping to find him, that he might be brought home, and she might tend him while he slept, and be near him when he woke, though she well knew the querulous temper that was sure to possess him then ; nothing right, no peace, no rest, till he went out, and then she knew that whatever the reason he alleged for going, she was sure to find him at this station sooner or later.

We will not dwell at large upon the further part of the line, because it is too awful. We said that there was a law by which all passengers should be turned out of the train at Intoxication Station ; but as a matter of fact, those who are frequent passengers so far, are almost sure sooner or later, to be taken on either by cheating or oversight. They get so poisoned by the air that their life is almost insufferable when they are out of it. So if Salvo, or their own friends, with great difficulty, succeed in getting them out of the train, they will make any excuse to start again. They are up to all sorts of dodges to obtain their end, and as the prince has arranged his stations so as to render every facility, it is very difficult to prevent them from ruining themselves.

We have heard of the further journey from some who have been, but even to think of it makes them shudder. As the train whizzes on the air becomes even fouler, though its effect is not quite the same. The comfortable stupefaction gives place to an awful wakefulness that

takes in all the horrors of the situation, with horrors of fancy added ; the grinning officials throw off their polite behaviour.

"We are sure of you now," they say ; "how well we have caught you with our train dodge. The prince whom we serve will roar with delight that his enemy's subjects are caught so cleverly. 'You didn't mean to come,' did you say ? ah, we know you didn't, but we meant you to come. We know we shall have a fine number of the respectable people, who get in at Little Drop, and mean to get out at Moderation."

So the miserable passengers are taunted, all their faculties being specially keen to take it in ; they know death is before them, they know how hard, almost impossible, it is to get out, and even if they could, they have been so long accustomed to the air that they fancy they would die without it.

The next platform is called Delirium Tremens. It is a dark, awful place, infested with demons. Very few ever get out here, the difficulties are so great. However, Salvo has helped a few, and

very grateful are they to him. They know the horrors of the line, and do not laugh at his warning voice.

Among these was a fine working man. He shall tell his own story, for he never tires of warning all he meets against the serpent that has bitten him. His name is William Strongwill, and he says :

“ My good father brought me up to hate the very sight of the drink train. When I was a little boy, I used to think all those who rode in it most wicked, but when I was beginning to feel myself a man, I liked to show that I had independent opinions in this matter as well as in others. I went to the church where the Rev. Nonpareil Nonsuch preached, and though I did not care much for all the good things he taught, I made his opinions upon the drink line my own, and argued with my poor father, always imagining I had the best of it, though, however strong his arguments might have been, I had made up my mind that I was going to ride as others did. Most young fellows who think themselves superior

to their fathers are very foolish, and I certainly was. My shopmates all rode in the drink train; so did I. A little way every day, and a longer distance when week end and wages came.

"For a time I never on any pretext went beyond Too Much, but I went there oftener and oftener and was getting much more easy about it, when presently we got our wages raised and to commemorate the day we all rode on to Intoxication. From that day I grew fonder and fonder of the line, until one day I managed to get under a seat so that I should not be noticed and turned out even there. One of the officials winked at me slyly, and I winked at him, we understood each other. I thought him a great friend of mine, he seemed very fond of me, and I enjoyed his company as I rode along, for he could be pleasant enough. When I roused up after my stupid sleep I found almost all the passengers gone. The train was dolefully dark, and there were awful shrieks and cries as we passed along, I could hardly say where from. My false friend shook me by the shoulder and grinned in my

face : ‘ I knew I’d get you, I’ve had my eye on you a long time, no escaping now, old boy, you’re caught for ever.’ He showed his face too soon, a little more and I should have been caught for ever, as he said, but now, stung by his falseness, and full of the horror of my position, I turned upon him with all my strength and threw him down. Then summoning up all my determination, I prepared to leap out as soon as the platform should come. My enemy was just turning upon me again when I threw myself out of the window almost in the darkness, and might have been killed by the fall had not a good friend been there to help me. As it was, I was severely injured, and lay ill for weeks, fancying that one breath of the poisonous air of the train would put life into me, and yet determined never to try it. My good friend Salvo nursed me and cheered me on through those awful weeks of slow recovery, and now I want to help him in his work of warning all I can against the deceitful line.

“ It is not safe to go near it. No one knows

till they have tried as I have the fearful power the prince has over those who are his passengers and in his clutches.

"Those who remain in the train as it goes farther still, are carried to the dreaded goal, Drunkard's Grave. None have ever returned from that place to tell us of its misery, for those who are once there are in the prince's own country."

Such is the earnest warning from one who has himself escaped as a brand from the burning.

With this testimony we will end this little story. It may sound very unreal, as it is, but the sad, sober fact remains that 60,000 of our fellow-countrymen do actually reach Drunkard's Grave every year, lured on from point to point, until they are past recall.

Also it is a fact that Salvo—not one, but many—is still working; but it is a hard task, and he needs the earnest help of all who wish their lives in this world not to be a curse, but a blessing.

THE END.



